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3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, November 21

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)

November 22, 2006

09:01

Attended a cabinet meeting. Foreign Minister Aso stayed on. Afterward met with Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Amari, followed by Finance Minister Omi.

09:58

Signed in at the Imperial Palace to report his return.

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10:36

Met at Kantei with LDP Policy Research Council Chairman Nakagawa.

11:40

Met Chief Cabinet Secretary Shiozaki and his deputy Nemoto.

14:02

Met Nemoto, followed by Economic and Fiscal Policy Minister Ota and others, joined in by Nemoto.

15:33

Met with Prime Minister Rasmussen of Denmark.

16:45

Met Science and Technology Minister Takaichi, Council for Science and Technology Policy member Hiroyuki Abe, and others.

17:17

Attended a meeting of the Council for Science and Technology Policy.

18:13

Met Shiozaki, followed by Administrative Reform Minister Sata, Cabinet Office Senior Vice Minister Hayashi, and others, joined in by administrative streamlining council chairman Iida.

19:40

Returned to his residence in Tomigaya.

4) Abe-planned Japanese-version of NSC to be take first step toward launching today

ASAHI (Page 3) (Excerpts)

November 22, 2006

A council chaired by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to strengthen the functions of Kantei (Prime Minister's Official Residence) on national security will be launched today with the aim of establishing a Japanese-version of the US' National Security Council (NSC). The council, consisting of opinion leaders who have handled Japanese security crises, will discuss how to erect a national control tower to handle foreign and security policy affairs. A study on the right to collective self-defense - a challenge set forth by Abe -- is also expected to become a "hidden theme."

In a press conference yesterday, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki described the council as a group of professionals.

Many members have engaged in crisis management. For instance, Nobuo Ishihara handled as a deputy chief cabinet secretary the crisis situation in the wake of the firing of a Rodong missile by North Korea, as well as the Great Osaka-Kobe Earthquake. Shunji Yanai was

the first secretary general of the International Peace Cooperation Headquarters launched under the UN Peacekeeping Operations Cooperation Law, and when the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the US occurred, Ken Sato was serving as vice defense minister.

The lineup of such members reflects Abe's intention to pursue pragmatic discussion. Abe also expects the former bureaucrats on the team to rein back their respective government ministries and agencies. Once the NSC is launched, it might infringe on the vested

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interests of the Foreign Ministry, the Defense Agency, and other agencies.

A Foreign Ministry official took this view: "We will welcome the step if it can enhance diplomatic functions in general. It would be meaningless if the new body takes too much time in processing issues, and its functions might become paralyzed as a result."

Atsuyuki Sassa, a former National Police Agency official, has already learned of complaints from the agency that the council is short on terrorism and natural disaster experts. Sassa expressed his eagerness for realizing the plan, saying, "We have been conducting the debate over the last three decades. We will do our best to live up to Prime Minister Abe's expectations."

What Abe has in his mind is the US' 200-member National Security Council that is placed directly under the president. Abe has been developing the plan from before becoming prime minister by exchanging views with former American NSC staffers. In his policy speech, Abe unveiled a plan to build a format to allow the Kantei to keep close communication channels with the White House.

But the prime minister's power over the cabinet ministers and the council members is not as strong as that held by the US president, who has full command of his administration.

Advisor Yuriko Koike toured Britain in early November to take a firsthand look at the situation there. In Britain, which also has a parliamentary system, the Cabinet Secretariat has the power to undertake coordination with relevant agencies in emergency situations. The council intends to study matters by using the British model as a reference, which is regarded as relatively easy to introduce.

The council's themes might expand once the NSC is launched.

One of the members, military analyst Kazuhisa Ogawa noted: "People eager to launch the NSC are all aware of the need to discuss the question of the right to collective self-defense. Once we start discussing it, we might be able to reach a conclusion early."

His view is that the NSC will conduct fundamental debate on Japan's security policy.

On Sept. 29, Abe delivered a policy speech that said: "We will thoroughly study individual, specific cases to identify what kind of case falls under the exercise of the right of collective self-defense."

Another council member said eagerly: "I would like to see the council reach a consensus in line with the prime minister's plan to study specific cases."

The right to collective defense has surfaced as a "hidden theme" reflecting the difficulty openly discussing it in the government.

In the government, there is a hopeful voice that the prime minister will allow the country to partially exercise the right to collective self-defense in order to increase the bilateral nature of the Japan-US alliance. The Cabinet Legislation Bureau is highly alert against such development. A failure to launch a government-wide study panel might throw the government into confusion.

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5) Premier to study possibility of intercepting missiles targeted at US

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
November 22, 2006

Prime Minister Abe indicated last evening that he would consider reviewing a government statement that was released in 2003 by Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda at the time and that limited the scope of missile defense (MD) to Japan's self-defense only. "It showed a policy judgment regarding the introduction of an MD system," Abe told reporters at his office. In this regard, the premier noted that the question is whether an act of intercepting missiles headed for the United States falls under the category of collective self-defense. "We need to study its interaction with MD," he added.

Asked about collective self-defense, Abe stressed his view, saying, "We need to study it in order to fulfill the responsibility of protecting the Japanese people's lives and property."

The Fukuda statement was released along with the government's decision to introduce an MD system. It says: "MD is intended to defend Japan, so it will not be used to defend third countries. Accordingly, the issue of collective self-defense will not arise." The government will presumably study whether an act of intercepting ballistic missiles headed for the United States constitutes the defense of a third country or whether it is within the bounds of individual self-defense.

Meanwhile, US Ambassador to Japan Schieffer, when he met the press in October, called on Japan to reinterpret the Constitution so Japan will be allowed to intercept US-bound missiles with its MD systems.

6) Kyuma stands off with Abe, Shiozaki over MD case studies

SANKEI (Page 3) (Abridged)
November 22, 2006

Is it possible to shoot down ballistic missiles targeted at the United States? Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has now suggested the need for the government to study whether an act of cutting off US-bound missiles with Japan's missile defense (MD) system falls under the category of collective self-defense. Meanwhile, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki has echoed Abe's advocacy of case

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studies. Defense Agency Director General Fumio Kyuma, however, negated Shiozaki's view yesterday. "We can't shoot them down," Kyuma said. "I don't know what situation he has in mind," the defense chief added. With this, Kyuma criticized Shiozaki, distancing himself from Abe and his top government spokesman.

Abe yesterday evening implied the likelihood of reviewing the so-called CCS Fukuda statement, in which the government took the position that Japan would not use its MD system for third countries. "The statement showed a policy judgment when the government decided to introduce an MD system," Abe said. "It's a judgment as to specific cases, and that's the government's stance," the premier added. Referring to Japan's self-imposed prohibition against collective self-defense, Abe said the question is whether specific cases (such as intercepting missiles) are within the bounds of collective self-defense. "I mentioned that we would need to study

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interactions with MD in the government's constitutional interpretation," he said.

US Ambassador to Japan Schieffer recently touched on the United States' defense role, saying, "The United States is obligated to shoot down missiles even if they are targeted at Japan, but Japan is not obligated to do the reverse." Bearing this remark in mind, Abe has suggested the necessity of studying whether Japan is allowed to cut off missiles targeted at the United States.

Meanwhile, Kyuma, meeting the press yesterday, negated the feasibility of intercepting outbound missiles. "As a matter of fact, Japan's MD system cannot shoot down missiles launched at other countries," Kyuma said. "It's possible to defend Japan against inbound projectiles, but it's physically impossible to catch up with outbound missiles from behind," he added.

7) Japan opposed to EU's calling off of arms embargo to China: Abe

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
November 22, 2006

Prime Minister Abe met with visiting Danish Prime Minister Rasmussen yesterday afternoon at his office. In the meeting, the premier voiced his concern about China's military buildup, saying: "We need to pay close attention to China's arms expansion and its nontransparency. Japan is opposed to the European Union's lifting of its ban on arms exports to China."

8) Basic education law revision bill to clear Diet during current session; Defense Agency upgrade bill to be passed through Lower House before end of this month

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)
November 22, 2006

It has now been certain that a bill amending the Basic Education Law, which the cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has positioned as top priority, will be passed by the Diet during the current session. As a result of intermittent discussions of the Diet Affairs Committee chiefs of the ruling and opposition parties, the opposition, which had boycotted Diet debate, agreed yesterday to return to deliberations today. A House of Councillors special committee will begin deliberations today on the education legislation. A bill upgrading the Defense Agency to a ministry statute will likely clear the House of Representatives before the end of this month. The ruling coalition hopes to push the two bills through the Diet by Dec. 15, when the ongoing session ends, while looking into the possibility of a minor extension of the current session.

9) Governing parties confident about steering Diet after it returns to normal, aim to handle bills on priority basis

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
November 22, 2006

The Diet will return to normalcy after a lapse of seven days. The opposition parties, which had been refusing to attend Diet deliberations, are now forced to turn around their stance after having met public criticism. The ruling parties are deepening their confidence in better steering the Diet in the days ahead. They

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intend to handle bills on a priority basis during the limited remaining days of the session of the Diet.

During talks late yesterday of the Diet Affairs Committee chairmen from both the ruling and opposition parties, the opposition members called for intensive deliberations on such problems as school bullying at the Lower House Budget Committee.

This request was, however, rejected by the ruling bloc; both sides eventually agreed to hold an intensive question-and-answer session at the Special Committee on the Basic Education Law. But only three hours will be devoted to this session. In addition, when to hold the session has yet to be determined, thereby suggesting that the opposition bloc was forced to concede more than the ruling bloc in order to put an end to the stalemate in the Diet.

At a press conference after the talks, Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto or DPJ) Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Yoshiaki Takagi revealed his resentment: "It would be good if more time were devoted to deliberations, but that was the best choice we were able to make then. It was unavoidable."

The major reasons why the opposition camp has become weak-kneed were first of all because "Our refusal of deliberations encountered much severer criticism than expected," according to a Minshuto source, and second, because of the opposition candidate's defeat in the Okinawa gubernatorial election, in which the ruling and opposition camps faced off. There also is discord in the party over the boycotting strategy led by its House of Representatives members as its House of Councilors members were critical of the strategy.

Minshuto's Upper House Caucus Secretary General Imaizumi yesterday afternoon met with his ruling parties' counterparts Katayama of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Koba of the New Komeito and reached a basic agreement with them to bring the Diet to normalcy. At that point, Minshuto's Lower House group was still continuing negotiations with the ruling camp; as a result, it allowed the ruling parties to take advantage of its discord.

However, the Diet calendar is very tight for the ruling parties, given that there are only three weeks left before the end of the Diet session.

10) Minshuto back to Diet, affected by defeat in Okinawa election, plunging deeper into internal confusion; Lack of unity exposed between Lower, Upper House members

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 2) (Slightly abridged)
November 22, 2006

Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) decided yesterday to return to Diet deliberations, two days after the defeat of the candidate backed jointly by opposition parties in the Okinawa gubernatorial election. In the deliberations between the ruling and opposition parties yesterday, a lack of unity was exposed between House of Representatives and House of Councilors members in Minshuto. Party head Ichiro Ozawa, with an eye to the Upper House election next summer, stressed that the party will uphold its confrontational stance against the ruling camp. But discontent is erupting within the party. On bills to elevate the Defense Agency (JDA) to ministry status, as well, the main opposition party will be pressed to make a hard decision, given the divided views in the party.

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Opposition parties had boycotted deliberations on bills amending the Fundamental Law of Education since Nov. 15, when the ruling camp forcibly took a vote in a meeting of the Lower House Basic Education Law Special Committee. But they agreed in a meeting of the Diet Affairs Committee chairmen from the ruling and opposition parties yesterday to return Diet proceedings to normalcy. In a press conference after the meeting, Minshuto Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Yoshiaki Takagi said with a bitter look, "It could not be helped."

Encouraged by the victory of its-backed candidate, the ruling bloc assumed leadership in the meeting yesterday, even showing a willingness to push ahead with deliberations in the absence of the opposition parties. A senior ruling party member of the Diet Affairs Committee said, "We can now take a bullish stance. That was an influential election."

In Minshuto, a lack of unity between Lower and Upper House members has also come to the surface. Although the Diet Affairs Committee chairmen of ruling and opposition parties were still engaged in deliberations in the Lower House, the secretaries general of the Liberal Democratic Party, Minshuto and the New Komeito agreed to normalize Diet proceedings yesterday.

In the Upper House, Takeo Nishioka, who drafted Minshuto's proposal, and other opposition members called for deliberations, even while stressing the need to block a passage of the government-drafted education bills. Such independent actions, though, upset senior Diet Affairs Committee members of the Lower House, leaving dissension in the party.

In a press conference at party headquarters yesterday, Ozawa said in

a strong tone: "It is idiotic to say that we will change our confrontational stance because of our loss in the Okinawa election. Are party members in a state of gloomy depression? I don't think so."

Some observers point out that since Minshuto joined hands with the Japanese Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party in the Okinawa election, its conservative supporters have begun to distance themselves from the party. In response, Ozawa flatly said, "We must consider what we should do in order to win support from a large number of people. Is it possible for Minshuto alone to garner that number of votes?"

Stung by the defeat in the Okinawa gubernatorial election, some Minshuto members now are expressing dissatisfaction with Ozawa for leading the boycott strategy.

Ozawa seems to have had no choice but to agree to normalize Diet proceedings, giving consideration to such an atmosphere within the party.

The next question for the opposition party is how to respond to the legislation to upgrade the JDA to a ministry. The ruling bloc aims to have the bills clear the Lower House next week. Many Minshuto members indicate understanding of the elevation of the JDA status, but the dominant view is that shedding light on the truth of the scandal involving the Defense Facilities Administration Agency should be made a condition for us to support the bills.

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In reference to Foreign Minister Taro Aso's remarks calling for a debate on a nuclear options for Japan, Ozawa categorically said, "It is unacceptable to dwell on his assertion, while setting important issues aside. It is natural to place restrictions on party debate."

As one party member said, "The joint opposition struggling line has collapsed. We must return from a left-leaning policy course to what it used to be in the party." Monolithic unity in Minshuto seems to be slipping away.

11) Postal rebels' letter asking LDP to reinstate them does not state whether they support postal privatization; Hiranuma says, "We will reject a litmus test"

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Slightly abridged)
November 22, 2006

The full text of a draft letter written by the so-called postal rebels calling on the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to allow them to rejoin the party was revealed yesterday. The postal rebels, who bolted the LDP after voting against the government's sponsored postal-privatization bills at last year's regular Diet session, are now considering submitting the letter to the LDP. They pledge in the letter that they will cooperate with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in pushing forward his reform drive. However since the letter does not stipulate whether they support postal privatization, it appears to be difficult to convince some LDP lawmakers who are cautious about readmitting them to the party.

The letter addressed to Prime Minister Abe states: "We would like to push ahead with your reform drive and contribute to the LDP's prosperity. We therefore ask you to let us rejoin the party."

The letter does not refer to whether they support postal privatization, or whether they reflected on their conduct of violating the party rules, which party Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa has called for.

Takeo Hiranuma, the former trade minister who represents the group, demands that all former LDP lawmakers, including those who were defeated in the House of Representatives election last year, be readmitted. Therefore, he is mulling a submission of the letter under the names of postal rebels and those defeated in last year's Lower House election.

Hiranuma told reporters last night in Tokyo, "We will not take a litmus test (on whether to support postal privatization)." In his meeting with Nakagawa planned for today, Hiranuma seems to be opposing making their support for postal privatization as a precondition for reinstating them.

12) Hesitancy about readmitting postal rebels strong in LDP

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2)
November 22, 2006

Although the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leadership is now working seriously on coordination to reinstate the postal rebels, there is growing hesitancy within the party about doing so. If the party leadership defiantly reinstates them, the group favoring the readmission and the other group cautious about the idea might be at odds.

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A group of freshman Lower House members held a meeting yesterday and decided to ask the party leadership to continue internal discussions on the matter.

Last night a group of Lower House members not affiliated with any faction exchanged views with Secretary General Nakagawa. After the meeting, Yukari Sato told reporters, "We don't want to let voters down." She called for the party to exercise caution.

Toranosuke Katayama, secretary general of the LDP caucus in the Upper House who has pushed for their reinstatement, told reporters: "Those who were defeated in the election should be allowed to rejoin the party after the incumbent lawmakers are readmitted."

In an informal meeting of the Party Ethics Committee, a majority of 16 members attending the session agreed to reinstate the postal rebels on the condition that they clarify their support for postal privatization.

13) Return of postal rebels to LDP: Prime minister wavering between management of administration and friendship? Some lawmakers share political ideals with Abe; Aware of public opinion Abe unable to yield on sorting out issue finally

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
November 22, 2006

The issue of whether to allow the return to the party of the so-called "postal rebels," lawmakers who seceded from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to protest the privatization of postal services, is drawing much attention. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who is also president of the LDP, has been calmly watching how the matter develops. His approach is to relegate the issue to the party executive and then make a final decision, once he determines the direction of the party. What is his real intention though?

Abe on Nov. 19 told reporters during his recent visit to Vietnam, "I need to have them agree with the government's policy and basic approach before they can be allowed to return to the LDP. Otherwise, the public would find it difficult to understand. I have made it clear that postal privatization is a done deal." Abe thus for the first time said categorically that approving postal privatization is a precondition for their return to the party.

Many postal rebels otherwise share the prime minister's conservative political ideals.

An example of one such lawmaker is former Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Takeo Hiranuma. Before he left the LDP, he worked together with Abe in their effort to block the submission of the human rights protection legislation to the Diet. Many view that the prime minister must be eager for the return of Hiranuma, as one LDP source put it. In fact, many postal rebels might have assumed key posts under the Abe administration, if they had not left the party.

Presumably out of such feelings, the prime minister in late October

took a positive stance toward the return of postal rebels, noting, "I would like party leaders, starting with the secretary general, to consider what response the party should make to those who share our views." With this comment, the issue of allowing the return of postal rebels has taken on a realistic touch in one sweep.

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However, the matter is not as simple as that. Hiranuma is still against postal liberalization. Postal privatization is the symbol of reform, which Abe inherited from the Koizumi administration. If Abe forces his will on the party, allowing postal rebels to return to the LDP without wiping the slate clean on the main issue, the act would give the country the image of being contrary to reform. The public would then be bound to react negatively.

In November, Abe added another precondition, saying, "I want to reach a judgment, while taking into consideration the voices of party members and the Japanese people." On the 19th, he added another precondition that they need to approve postal privatization. It is clear that aware of views against their return to the party seen in public opinion and among party members, Abe is gradually adding stricter conditions.

Many aides to Abe rather take the position that the issue must be dealt with in a cautious manner, but they are unable to fathom what the prime minister, who is pondering the issue on his own, really thinks. Though his aides say that the prime minister's mind is divided on the matter, he appears to be agonizing over it, sandwiched between the need to manage his administration and his friendships.

Compared with former Prime Minister Koizumi, who carried through his policy with iron-heartedness, Abe is said to have tender feelings. What decision will he reach in the end?

14) Japan ranks 79th in terms of gender disparities in survey of 115 nations on economy, education, health, politics: Scandinavian countries occupy upper echelon

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)
November 22, 2006

The World Economic Forum (WEF), based in Geneva, on Nov. 21 released a report on a survey of 115 countries on gender disparities. Scandinavian countries, such as Sweden, occupied the upper echelon of the list of countries with fewer disparities. Japan ranked 79th.

The WEF conducted the survey by creating indices for data in four fields - the economy (income and professional positions), education (employment and higher education rates), health (life expectancy), and politics (ratio of women to men in cabinets and legislative bodies) - based on the statistics of the surveyed governments and international organizations, and results of hearings it conducted independently, and compared them. It adopted a ranking system for the second time following last year. However, since a different method was taken in the previous survey, which targeted only 60 countries, no comparison was made with the results of the previous survey.

Scandinavian countries - Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Iceland - occupied the top four slots, because gender disparities in the political and economic fields were smaller in those countries. Japan ranked first in the health area but came in 83rd in the economic area, 59th in the education area, and 83rd in the political area.

The WEF has created indices for gender disparities of each of the 115 countries in terms of economic opportunities and advancement into society in their own countries. It says that the level of

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economic development of the surveyed countries has not been taken into account. For this reason, the Philippines ranked sixth, as its gender disparities in the economic, educational, and health fields

were small, pushing up its total points.

Ranking of countries with fewer gender disparities

1.Sweden; 2. Norway; 3. Finland; 4. Iceland; 5. Germany; 6. The Philippines; 7. New Zealand; 8. Denmark; 9. Britain; 10. Ireland; 11. US; 12. Russia; 13. China; 14. France; 15. Japan; 16. South Korea; 17. India; 18. Yemen.

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